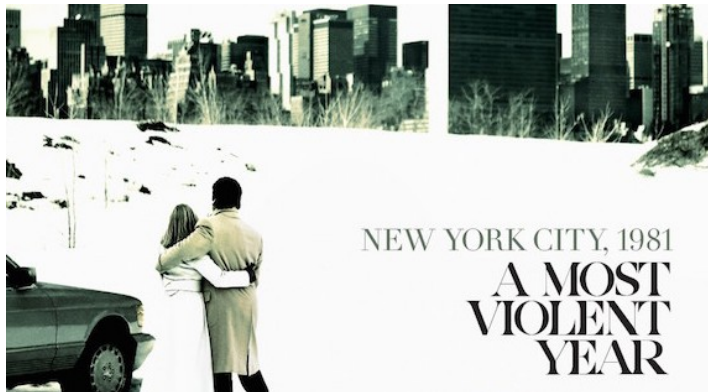




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A MOST VIOLENT YEAR



A Most Violent Year is not your usual crime drama. Set in 1981 New York, the story revolves around one man, Abel Morales, played by the exceedingly handsome Oscar Isaac. He is trying to do the right thing, but it becomes increasingly difficult for him to hold on to his integrity. The film is a morality play filled with conflict, dilemmas and choices that need to

be made under the looming umbrella of what are you willing to do for success. In this case, success is a million-dollar-plus deal that Abel needs to close before the clock runs out and he loses everything. This is not a fast-paced, over-the-top gangster tale – far from it. It is a captivating look at the dirty business of the oil business.

A Most Violent Year takes its time to lead up to the violence. So when it does hit, it hits hard. Oscar Isaac brings a sense of danger and intensity as the man who is not comfortable with what he has to do in order get ahead in the world, but is given few options. Survival of the fittest is about who can hold out, who can make things happen and, ultimately, who is left standing after the blood settles. The weak do not last long in the mean streets.

The city of New York becomes a sidekick to the action, interjecting itself with all its beautiful ugliness. As Morales, Isaac walks as though he is bulletproof, his perfectly styled hair is the crown that adorns his confident swagger. He is masculine yet tender, vulnerable yet invincible, not what you expect of someone seeking to control oil shipments along the northeast. That is what makes *A Most Violent Year* so different. Even the tension between Abel and his wife is steeped in a turbulent past that is not afraid to take a shot at a marriage that seems on the edge. And yet, there is an understanding between them that defies explanation. They have history that you don't need to see in order to understand their dynamics. It works even when it doesn't.

Jessica Chastain is memorable as Anna, a tough broad of a woman in the nicest sense of the word. She is a no-nonsense wife and mother who will stop at nothing to protect her family. No stranger to violence, she is an equal partner in the relationship and not to be underestimated or undervalued. Chemical and physical, the couple seeks to create an empire of their own among the group of mobsters and crooked law enforcers who are all determined to get theirs. Albert Brooks is very effective in the role of Morales' lawyer who helps broker the deals for him.



If I have one thing to criticize about *A Most Violent Year*, it is the ending. It seemed incomplete and unresolved as though there should be a sequel to let us

know how it all turned out. Or, maybe I just wanted a few more vicarious thrills. But the performances are all solid and it is definitely worth a trip to the matinee for this one.

I give *A Most Violent Year* three golden tickets.

